



# Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women

## Annual Report



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June 2016

### **Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women - Members**

*Gloria Cabral- Westport co-chair*  
*Jean Cotter Fox, Freetown co-chair*  
*Anne Dziura, Dartmouth*  
*Sylvia Gomes, New Bedford*  
*Michelle Keith, Dartmouth*  
*Susan Lee, PhD, Dartmouth*  
*Cyndi Marland, EdD, Dartmouth*  
*Dianna Williams, North Easton*

### **Accomplishments 2015- 2016**

#### ***Membership:***

This year two commissioners resigned (Irene Duprey-Gutierrez and Eunice Yang) Two vacancies were filled with commissioners, Michelle Keith and Sylvia Gomes. Another vacancy will be filled in September.

#### ***Meetings/Hearings:***

December 16, 2015, MCSW with Local and Regional Commissions

#### ***Additional Activities:***

##### September 29, 2015

Profiles in Leadership: Women of Color Elected to Office in Massachusetts. Held at the State House with BCCSW in attendance.

##### September 30, 2015

Equal Pay Bill with Rep. Haddad. Commissioner Jean Fox represented the commission. There were a number of state reps present, and Rep. Carol Fiola was one of the facilitators.

October 15, 2015

The Women's Fund of Southeastern MA held its Annual Leadership Breakfast. This year's focus was on the final recommendations stemming from the work of the *Task Force on Pathways to a Sustainable Wage* for Women. Commissioner Jean Fox co-chaired the 10-month Task Force effort with Valerie Bassett of the Women's Fund. The Task Force was comprised of regional leaders working for and on behalf of women and included legislators, educators from local school districts, colleges, and universities, and nonprofit organizations, among others. Task Force panelists from around the state addressed such issues as wage inequity, opportunities for union jobs, educational challenges for women, universal pre-K, the cost and availability of quality child care, the need for greater representation of women in government and in business, the need for more public transportation, immigration reform and wellness. The featured speaker for the sold-out event was Attorney General Maura Healey. Senator Elizabeth Warren sent a video statement focused on equal pay and education. The final recommendations were presented, with an urgent call to action for advocacy and support to address the recommendations. Local media covered the work of the Task Force as well as the Breakfast.

Grant - Commissioner Ann Dzuira applied for and managed the United Way Fund grant that was used for the purchase of Massachusetts resident Jean Kilbourne's *Killing Us Softly 4* and updated brochures about BCCSW.

Video Series - Commissioner Cyndi Marland (and Director of Media at Dartmouth Community Access Cable Television) and former Commissioner Gail Fortes and The Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women have partnered with other organizations to create a video series on issues and resources called *The Voice of SouthCoast Women*. Commissioners participate in the taped video panels, along with regional and community experts on various topics, and contact information is provided at the end of each video. Because of increasing interest in the series from beyond regional and state boundaries, the series has been renamed, WOW. Gail Fortes hosts the series and moderates the panels.

Some video specifics:

- The Status of Women with Commissioner Jean Fox and Michelle Keith and Commissioner Pam Pollack from the Cape and Islands Commission.
- Women's Health with Commissioner Cyndi Marland
- Economic Independence with Commissioner Jean Fox
- Domestic Violence with Commissioner Dianna Williams
- Education with Commissioner Gloria Cabral
- Mental Health with Commissioner Michelle Keith
- Immigration with Commissioner Michelle Keith
- Women in Entertainment with Commissioner Eunice Yang and former Commissioner Dr. Julie Parker (NB: This video was initially aired just prior to the Academy Awards and highlighted nominated films using the Bechdel Test, which gauges women's roles in film in terms of predominance, presence, sexuality, etc.)

### **Other Highlights of the Year:**

February 1, 2016 - Legislative Breakfast. Well attended by the local delegation. The main talking points were equal pay, universal Pre-K, and childcare.

### **March 8, 2016 - 19th Annual International Women's Day Breakfast**

*When Women Set the Agenda: Equal Pay, Paid Family Leave and Child Care*

Commissioner Jean Fox worked with a team in organizing for an International Women's Day event in March. The Women's Center secured the Whaling Museum as a venue at no cost. The award-winning documentary film, *To Educate a Girl*, was screened in the Auditorium and was extremely well received.

March 24, 2016 - *Killing Us Softly 4*. The film was screened at Bristol Community College and was very well attended. Representative Carole Fiola provided welcoming remarks to the group. Commissioner Gloria Cabral provided refreshments. All Commissioners in attendance led an energetic and powerful Q&A with the audience. -

May 8, 2016 - 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Mother's Day Tiara 5K. Sponsored by the Women's Fund of Southeastern MA, BCCSW participates in the planning and execution of this popular fundraising event.

May 24, 2016 - Advocacy Day. BCCSW commissioners worked with the YWCA of Southeastern Massachusetts, New Bedford's Global Charter School, Freetown-Lakeville's Apponequet Regional High School, Fall River's BMC Durfee and a number of area organizations to attend Advocacy Day at the Massachusetts State House. There were approximately 80 high school students and dozens of area residents in attendance. Former Commissioner Gail Fortes served as the "reporter" on Women's Advocacy Day as part of BCCSW's video coverage of that event.

**Unsung Heroines** – Two from our region were recognized and celebrated at this year's event. Both recipients were recommended by BCCSW to area legislators for nomination.

### **Issues Identified to Date:** ( \* top five – these priorities have not changed )

- \*Education
- \*Healthcare
- \*Childcare
- \*Sexual Abuse/Assault
- \*Transportation
- Disabilities and women
- Language Barriers
- Pay equity

Prison Reform/Re-entry  
Legislative Support of Women's Issues (e.g., DTA policies and Equal Pay)  
Single women's eligibility for services  
Substance Abuse  
Wage Study  
Domestic Violence  
Bullying  
Women Veterans  
Internet Safety  
Homelessness for women and families  
Early Education

**Goals for 2016-2017:**

Continue advocating for the Equal Pay bill.

Expand Domestic Violence education effort.

Increase utilization of the media to raise awareness of the Commission.

Maintain regular contact with legislators on issues germane to the Commission's identified priority areas

Continue joint meetings/events with the Cape and Islands Commission

Expand and diversify BCCSW's membership

Identify strategies to connect with the region's girls.

Expand collaborative efforts to reach more women and benefit from the expertise of other organizations that support women and girls, either financially or through public awareness and programming.

Submitted by: Gloria Cabral and Jean Fox, Co-Chairs BCCSW, and BCCSW Commissioners